

Emotional Emancipation: Addressing the Legacy of Historical Trauma Among Persons of African Ancestry

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Goals

- Develop expanded definition of trauma
 - Including historical and intergenerational traumatic experiences.
- Understand historical referents related to persons of African ancestry that contribute to the lie of Black inferiority.
- Review key components of community-based treatment model– Emotional Emancipation Circles – and how to design them to address historical trauma within communities of African ancestry.

Understanding Racism

- Any attitude, action, institutional structure, or social policy that subordinates or makes inferior persons or groups because of their color (Jones, 1997; Ponterotto, Utsey, & Pederson, 2006).

Racial Microaggressions

- Initially coined by Dr. Chester Pierce: “These [racial] assaults to black dignity and black hope are incessant and cumulative ... In fact, the major vehicle for racism in this country is offenses done to blacks by whites in this sort of gratuitous never- ending way. These offenses are microaggressions. These mini-disasters accumulate. It is the sum total of multiple microaggressions by whites to blacks that has pervasive effect to the stability and peace of this world” (Pierce, 1974).



Racial Microaggressions

- Verbal
- Noverbal
- Environmental

- Are constant and continuous.
- Attack self-esteem and self-image and can cause anger and frustration, deplete psychic energy, lower the sense of well-being and worthiness, produce physical health problems, shorten life expectancy



Racial Stress

- Race-related stress can cause:
- Feelings of anger, anxiety, paranoia, helplessness-hopelessness, frustration, resentment, and fear
- Negative effects to the body including changes in immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular system functioning
- Decrease in the sense of one's quality of life

Internalized Racism

- Turning upon ourselves, upon our families, and upon our own people the racial beliefs, attitudes, practices, and oppression inflicted on us by the dominant society.



Defining Trauma

- Traumatic events are ***extraordinary***. Not necessarily because they occur infrequently, but because they ***overwhelm*** the ordinary human adaptations to life.
- Traumatic events, are outside the ***normal*** range of a person's experience and constitute, for that person, an ***exceptional*** mental and physical ***stressor***

What makes an event Traumatic?

- There are two main elements:
 - The nature of the event usually involves actual or feared death or serious physical or emotional injury.
 - What the event means to the victim.
- Dysfunctional reactions to traumatic events are often understood through the diagnostic category of PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder.

PTSD – An Overview

- Those who have experienced or witnessed an event involving actual or threatened death or serious injury and have responded with feelings of fear, helplessness, or horror may develop PTSD symptoms.



PTSD – Symptoms

- Intrusion (e.g., dreams, thoughts that remind one of the event)
- Avoidance
- Negative alterations in cognitions and mood
- Alterations in arousal and reactivity (e.g., difficulty sleeping, irritability)
 - Meet the criteria for PTSD if experienced for at least 1 month (DSM-V, 2013)

PTSD – Symptoms (cont.)

- Associated with impairment in a person's ability to function in typical social or family situations
- Feelings of helplessness
- Survival guilt, and
- Feelings of being under threat



Traditional Approaches to Trauma Treatment

- Exposure-Based Cognitive Therapy
 - Goals:
 - Decrease symptoms
 - Strengthen sense of mastery
 - Decrease avoidance
 - Strategies:
 - Understand PTSD
 - Remember and organize
 - Grieve losses



Need for Community-based Interventions

Entire community is affected

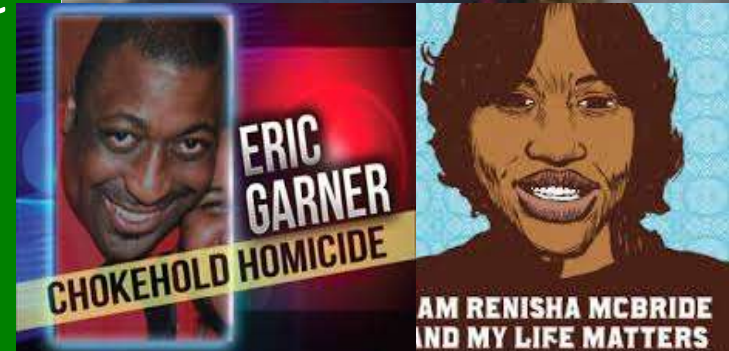


Trauma can have negative affects on:

- Trust
- Connection/Attachment
- Communication
- Boundaries
- Sense of safety
- Parenting

Limitations of Current Conceptualizations of Trauma

First, current conceptualizations were not developed to address intergenerational or historical trauma



- They do not adequately speak to the possibly compounding nature of responses to multiple stressors.

Limitations of Current Conceptualizations of Trauma

- Focus remains on the individual
- Fail to address the familial and social impacts of trauma reactions.
- Exploring these other levels is particularly important in communities of African ancestry, in which members tend to have strong social and family affiliations and the infliction of trauma was trans-individual.

Limitations of Current Conceptualizations of Trauma

- Third, such categories do not explore the ways that historical and contemporary traumas interact, or
- How a present-day trauma might be interpreted within the context of historical events.



Limitations of Current Conceptualizations of Trauma

- Lastly, work examining the factors that buffer the impact of traumatic events – both contemporary and historical – is still quite limited.
 - Partly, due to the continuing denial of the validity of African humanity
 - Partly, due to concerns of communities of African ancestry to focus on resilience and strengths

Defining Historical Trauma

- *Historical trauma* is conceptualized as a collective complex trauma inflicted on a **group** of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation—ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation.
- It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events

Defining Historical Trauma

- Associated historical events tend to be profoundly destructive at a physical and/or emotional level and are generally experienced by many people in a community

Historical trauma is collective in that many members of a community view the events as acute losses and experience corresponding trauma reactions



Defining Historical Trauma

- 3 distinguishing characteristics:
 - Generally widespread among communities of African ancestry;
 - The events generate high levels of collective distress and mourning in contemporary communities;
 - The events are usually perpetrated by outsiders with purposeful and often destructive intent.

Historical Context: Applying Construct of Trauma to Persons of African ancestry

- The ideologies of black inferiority and white superiority are rooted in the trade in humans and colonial expansion. Historical stages of oppression are:
 - Pre-enslavement (prior to 1619),
 - During enslavement (1619-1865), and
 - Post-enslavement (after 1865)

Applying Construct of Trauma to Persons of African ancestry

- During the pre-enslavement era:
 - No legal precedence existed that defined black inferiority. Whites suspected that blacks were inferior but they did not have reasons for how or why.
- During the era of enslavement:
 - Legal processes and several court cases defined and enforced the notion/lie of black inferiority. (Russell-Brown, 2006)

Maafa – The Great Disaster

- Refers to the *systematic and systemic disintegration, dehumanization and negation of the essence of the African;*



*Beyond human comprehension and convention;
and
Its key feature is the “denial of the validity of African
peoples’ humanity” and an ever-present total
disregard and disrespect for the African’s right to
exist.*

Brief Critical History of Africans in the US

- Want to take a few minutes to provide a truncated, but powerful review of the *some* of the examples of collective trauma experienced by African Americans.
- Remembering these examples provides clear evidence of the multiple and ongoing assaults against our communities

1619 – 1st ship with captured Africans arrives in emerging US colonies



The landing of the first Negroes

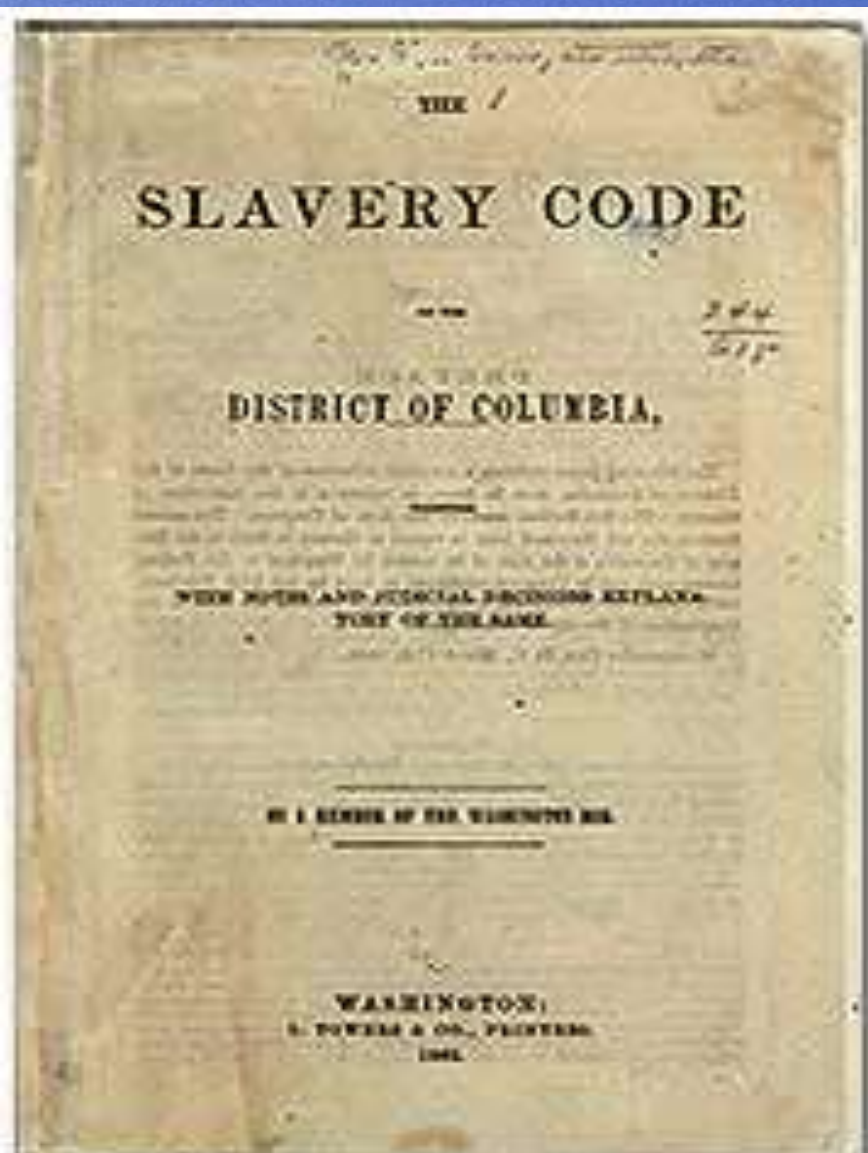
Slave or Enslaved?

- A noun or a verb?
- A status or an action?
- An identity or a condition of dehumanization and oppression?

LABELS MATTER!!!!



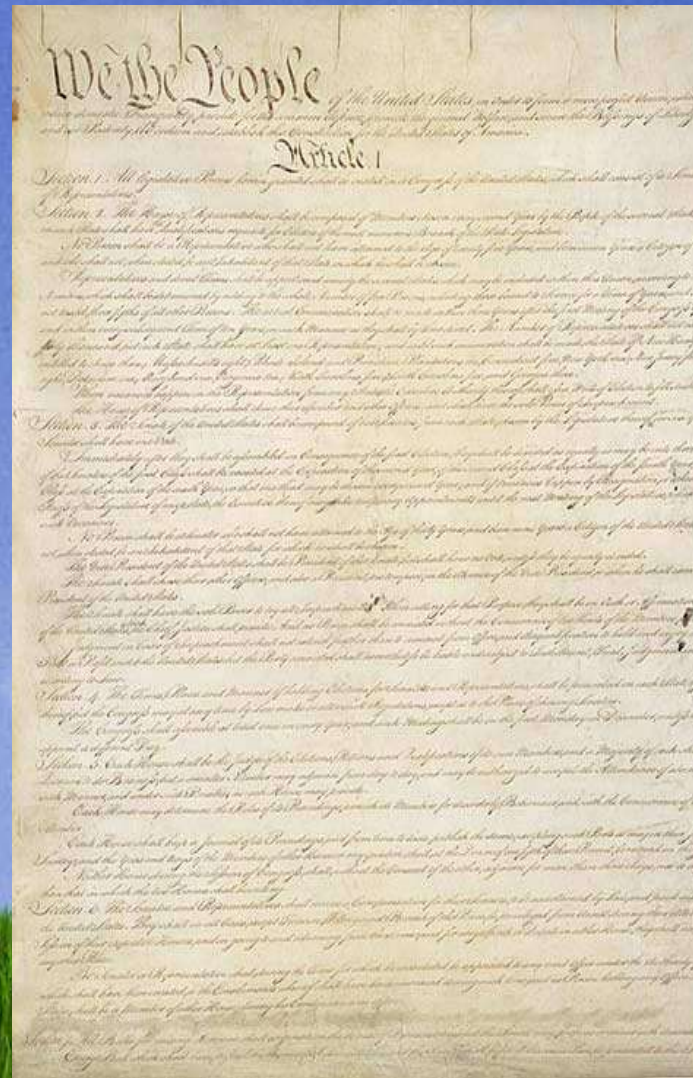
Slave Codes



**If the slaves
resist the
master, he can
kill his slaves,
free of
punishment**

Three-Fifths Compromise

The Philadelphia Convention of 1787



1793 Fugitive Slave Act

The Slave-hunter is among us!

BE ON YOUR GUARD!

AN ARREST IS PLANNED FOR TO-NIGHT.

Cotton Production



Compromise of 1850

Second Fugitive Slave Act

CAUTION!!

COLORED PEOPLE
OF BOSTON, ONE & ALL,
You are hereby respectfully CAUTIONED and advised, to avoid conversing with the
Watchmen and Police Officers
of Boston,
For since the recent **ORDER OF THE MAYOR & ALDERMEN**, they are empowered to act as
KIDNAPPERS
AND
Slave Catchers,
And they have already been actually employed in **KIDNAPPING, CATCHING, AND KEEPING SLAVES.** Therefore, if you value your **LIBERTY**, and the *Welfare of the Fugitives* among you, *Shun* them in every possible manner, as so many **HOUNDS** on the track of the most unfortunate of your race.

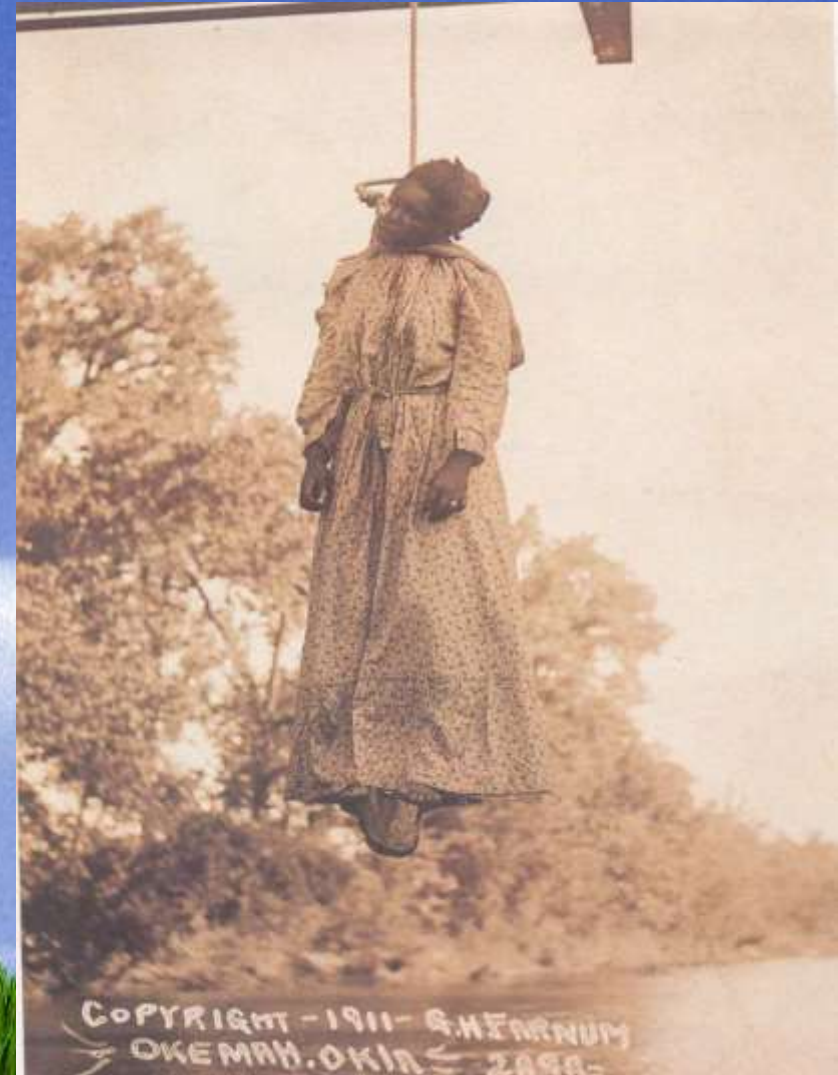
Keep a Sharp Look Out for
KIDNAPPERS, and have
TOP EYE open.
APRIL 24, 1851.

We could not...

- testify on our own behalf
- have trial by jury

3,446 Black Lynchings from 1882-1968

Last Recorded Lynching: 1981 Michael Donald in Alabama



Dred Scott vs Sandford, 1857



- Scott, enslaved in Virginia, sued to gain his freedom after his master took him to a free state.
- In rejecting his plea, the justices ruled Scott was not even a citizen, and therefore could not sue
- Black people "are beings of an inferior order..."

US Supreme Court ruled:

- **Blacks are so inferior that "they have no rights which the white man is bound to respect."**

Ten years later: 1867



- Dred Scott passes away and is buried in Calvary Cemetery on West Florissant Avenue, in St. Louis, Missouri, near Ferguson

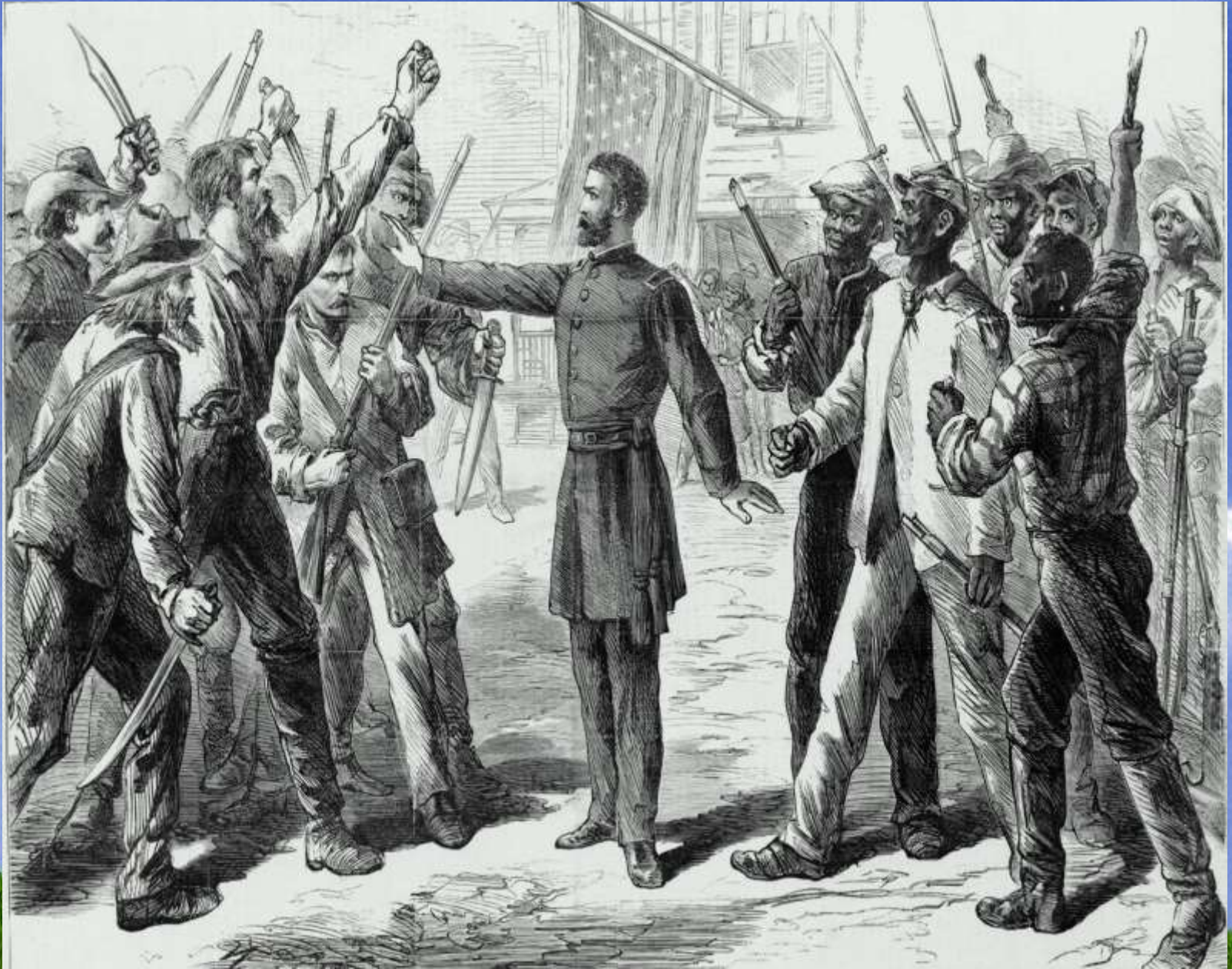
1865 – 13th Amendment

Emancipation – Without A Plan

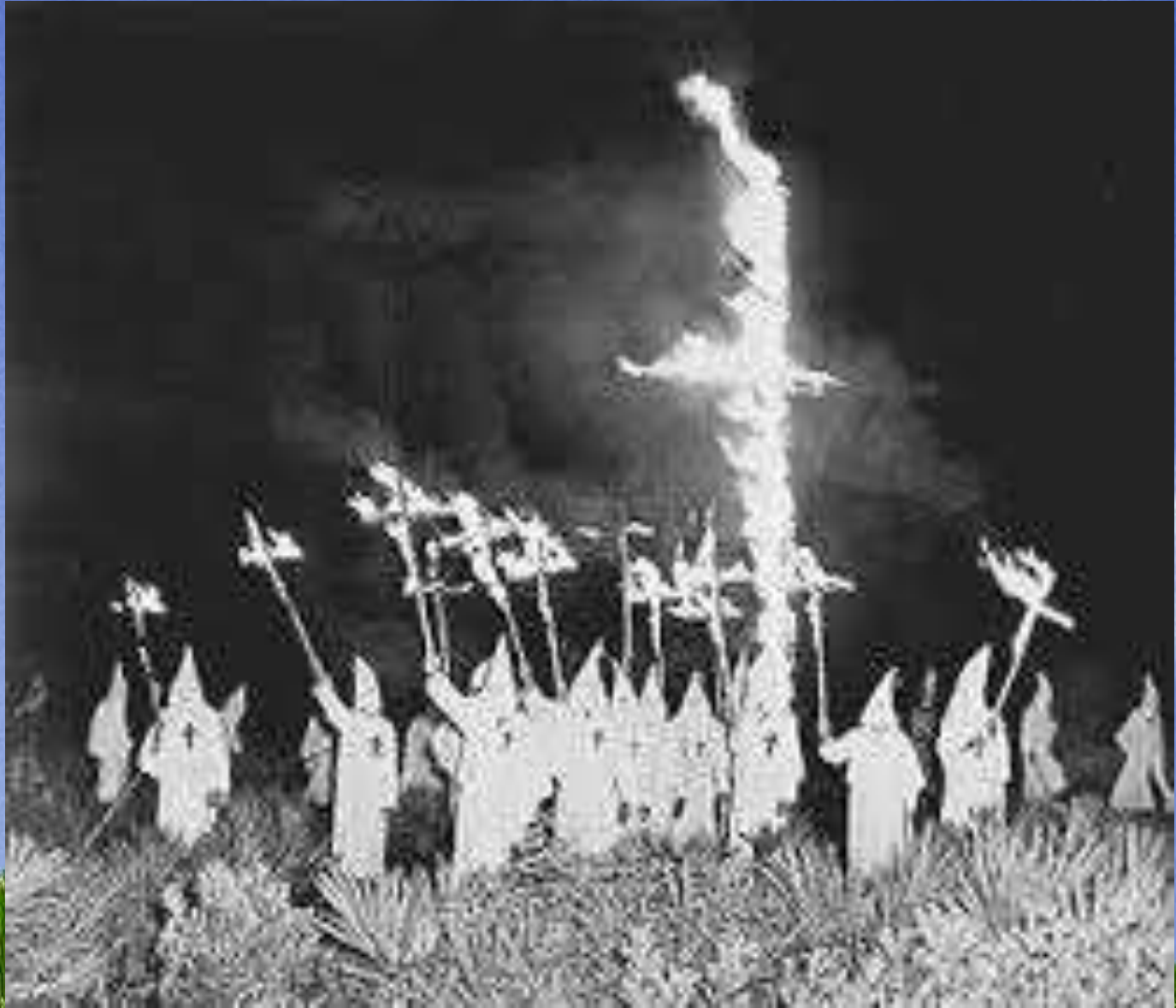
to Restore Humanity, Dignity, and Agency to Black Life



1865 – 1877 – Reconstruction Era



1865--Enter The Klu Klux Klan



1865 – 1936 – Convict Leasing



Enslavement
By
Another
Name

The Black Codes



1896 – Plessy v. Ferguson

Establishes Separate but Equal



NEGRO EXPULSION FROM RAILWAY CAR, PHILADELPHIA.

1921 – Tulsa Race Riots



1932 – 1972

Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment



1954 — Brown v. Board of Education

Late News

Associated Press
Leased Wires

FOR ALL DEPARTMENTS CALL
4500

56th Year
Founded February, 1898
No. 11,841

Danville, Va., Monday Afternoon, May 17, 1954

Price: FIVE CENTS

SEGREGATION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS ENDED BY COURT

Ruled Unconstitutional By Supreme Court; Date To End Practice Not Set

Suit Being Tried

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (AP)—A suit by John Locke Green to force his recognition as a Democratic candidate for Congress went to trial before a three-judge federal court here today.

Green, a Republican when he held office as Arlington County treasurer, brought the suit against Virginia's 10th District Democratic Committee after it refused to accept him as a party candidate for the forthcoming congressional election.

Funds Requested

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Eisenhower asked Congress today for an extra \$24,100,000 to help areas crowded by federal workers or workers on federal projects with school construction.

The request, in a letter to Speaker of the House Martin, is for funds for the next fiscal year beginning July 1. The extra money is in addition to 40 million dollars already in the budget for the same purpose for the fiscal year ahead.

Considering Violations

WASHINGTON (AP)—Att. Gen. Brownell said officially today the Justice Department is considering "possible violations of the criminal law" in the preparation and dissemination of a document Sen. McCarthy presented May 4 in the McCarthy-Army hearings.

Brownell made the disclosure in making that no part of the document should be disseminated from his confidential sources.

Strike Called

Rules Separate Facilities Are Unequal

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Supreme Court ruled unanimously today that segregation of Negro and White students in public schools is unconstitutional. But it said it will hear further arguments this

Danville School Board Will Meet At Once To Study Court Decision

Officials Give Views On Matter; Call For Calm Study On All Sides

Robert P. McDonnell, chairman of the School Board, on being in-

Good Progress

Firm Entered, Haul Is Made; Boy Wounded

Man Accidentally Shot In The Hand

A breaking and entering and an accidental shooting topped occurrences claiming police attention over the week-end.

Charlie's Place on Riverside Drive was broken into by way of a rear window and a sizeable quantity of cigarettes, cigars, candy and chewing gum taken. The discovery was made during a routine check by Lt. Curtis Fields shortly after last midnight. Patrolmen J. B. Walton and J. B. Gardner conducted the initial investigation and this morning turned the case over to the Delaplane Division.

Paroled Slayer Captured After Bizarre Deaths

Held For Four Brutal Killings

MOULTREE, Ga. (AP)—Capture of a paroled Georgia convict wanted in connection with four brutal slayings ended three days of terror today and brought signs of relief to this South Georgia community.

Tom Williams, a 45-year-old paroled murderer, was taken on the edge of a swamp east of the city last night. Lt. W. E. McDuffie of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation made the capture. He hustled Williams off to his wife's home where he was held.

McCarthy-Army Hearings' Future Thrown In Doubt

Presidential Order Shutting Off Inquiry Denounced By Sen. McCarthy

WASHINGTON (AP)—The future of the McCarthy-Army hearings was thrown in doubt today by a presidential order—denounced by Sen. McCarthy as an "iron curtain"—shutting off inquiry into whether "higher-ups" directed the charges against the senator.

The Senate investigations subcommittee recessed its public hearings at 11:55 a. m. (EDT) to consider in closed session what stand it might take on Eisenhower's order.

McCarthy, claiming that "this cover up" made it impossible to get at the truth, declined to say, when asked by

1955 – The Murder of Emmett Till



1963 – Birmingham Church Bombing



1965 – Bloody Sunday



1965 – Malcolm X Assassinated



THE VIOLENT END OF THE MAN CALLED MALCOLM X

His life ending one through a full house of more people would be a shame, Malcolm X, a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people, was being shot down in the streets, and 400 of his people had gathered around him to witness the end of a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people.

He was a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people, and he was a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people. He was a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people, and he was a man who had been a leader in the struggle for the rights of a Negro people.

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1965 – Watts Riots



1968 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Killed



1982 – Enter ...The War on Drugs Or A War on Us?

BLACK AMERICANS
ARE
13% OF THE US POPULATION
14% OF DRUG USERS
56%
OF THOSE INCARCERATED
FOR DRUG RELATED CRIMES

#DRUGWARMOVIE - OCT 5

Or the
Next
Version
of
Enslavement?

1997 – Prison Industrial Complex



**DON'T
KEEP
CALM**

**MORE BLACK MEN ARE
IN PRISON TODAY,
THAN THERE WERE ENSLAVED
IN 1850.**

**WHILE BLACK WOMEN ARE THE FASTEST GROWING
SECTOR OF THE PRISON POPULATION.**

CITED: MICHELLE ALEXANDER THE NEW JIM CROW: MASS INCARCERATION IN THE AGE OF COLORBLINDNESS

1999

The Murder of Amadou Bailo Diallo



2001 Investigation

406 cases of theft = 24k acres of Black-owned land antebellum period to present



The New Millennium

The School-to-Prison Pipeline



2000's Disproportionality and Disparities

- Special education
- School suspensions
- School drop outs/push out
- Foster care
- Juvenile justice system
- Health status
- Unemployment
- Poor access to healthy food and recreation

2008

- The United States House of Representatives issues an apology for slavery.
- Yet the lie of Black inferiority still prevails.



1944 George Stinney
Executed at 14



2006
Jenna Six



2006 Murder
of Sean Bell



2012: Case of
Marissa Alexander



2012
Trayvon Martin



2014
Eric Garner



24 CASES: Killed by Police/Died in Custody Under Questionable Circumstances



MIKE BROWN

2014, Age 18
Pending.



AMADOU DIALLO

1999, Age 23
Cops indicted, all acquitted.



OSCAR GRANT

2009, Age 23
Cop indicted, convicted.
Served 11 months.



JON FERRELL

2013, Age 24
Cop indicted, pending.



ALAN BLUEFORD

2012, Age 18
Cop not indicted.



CHAVIS CARTER

2012, Age 21
Cops not indicted.



ERIC GARNER

2014, Age 43
Pending.



SEAN BELL

2006, Age 23
Cops indicted, acquitted.



TIM STANSBURY

2004, Age 19
Cop not indicted.



EZELL FORD

2014, Age 25
Pending.



RAMARLEY GRAHAM

2012, Age 18
Cop indicted, indictment
tossed on technicality.



DANE SCOTT

2012, Age 18
Cop indicted, sentenced
to four years.



PHILLIP PANNELL

1990, Age 16
Cop indicted, acquitted.



PATRICK DORISMOND

2000, Age 26
Cop not indicted.



WENDELL ALLEN

2012, Age 20
Cop pled guilty of
manslaughter, 4 years.



VICTOR STEEN

2009, Age 18
Cop not indicted.



KENDREC MCDADE

2012, Age 19
Cops not indicted.



KIMANE GRAY

2013, Age 16
Pending.



ARMAND BENNETT

2014, Alive. Shot in head
cop turned off camera.
Pending.



DERRICK WILLIAMS

2011, Age 22
Cop not indicted.



OUSMANE ZONGO

2003, Age 43
Cop indicted, sentenced
to probation.



JOHN CRAWFORD

2014, Age 22
Pending.



JONNY GAMMAGE

1995, Age 31
Cop indicted, acquitted.



GUS RUGLEY

2004, Age 21
Cops not indicted.

2014 - Ferguson



Michael Brown 2014



Psychological Impact of the Lie

- Perceptions of a stressful situation that taxes or exceeds one's ability to cope may result in feelings of anger, anxiety, paranoia, helplessness-hopelessness, frustration, resentment, and fear
- Physiological responses to psychological stress occur as a result of unsuccessful coping responses
- The primary physiological stress response involves immune, neuroendocrine, and cardiovascular system functioning (Utsey et al., 2002, p. 368).
- Discrimination is a major threat to African American ... mental health (Keith et al., 2010).

Towards Emotional EmancipationSM

*The Association of Black Psychologists
Community Healing Network, Inc.*

“Emotional Emancipation Circles is a service mark of Community Healing Network that is the product of the collaboration between Community Healing Network and the Association of Black Psychologists and part of the larger movement being spearheaded by Community Healing Network to overcome and overturn the lie of Black inferiority: the root cause of the devaluing of Black lives.”

“Where do we go from here?”

“First, we must massively assert our dignity and worth. We must stand up amid a system that still oppresses us and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of values. We must no longer be ashamed of being Black. The job of arousing manhood within a people that have been taught for so many centuries that they are nobody... is not easy” — Dr. King (1967)

***“A people with power
look for the source of
problems within
themselves”***



“...Why, after all this time, when calculating the achievement of the ‘American Dream,’ are [Black people] still ranked at the bottom of almost every ‘good’ list, and at the top of the ‘bad’ lists?”

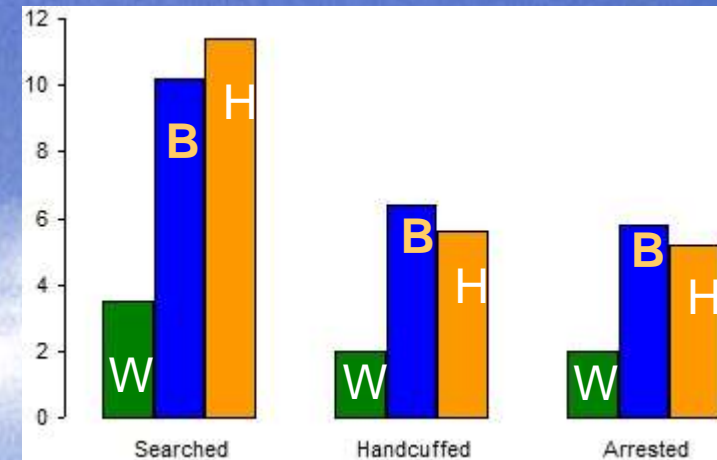
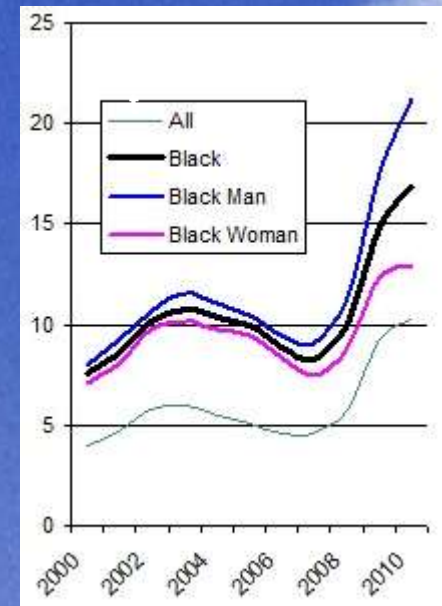
--Tom Burrell, author of *Brainwashed: Challenging the Myth of Black Inferiority* (2010)

Good Lists

- Wealth/income
- Marriage rates
- BA and graduate degrees
- Higher household income
- Home ownership
- Life expectancy

Bad Lists

- Substance use
- Incarceration rates
- Unemployment
- Foreclosure
- Poverty rates
- HIV/AIDS
- Stroke, Diabetes, Hypertension

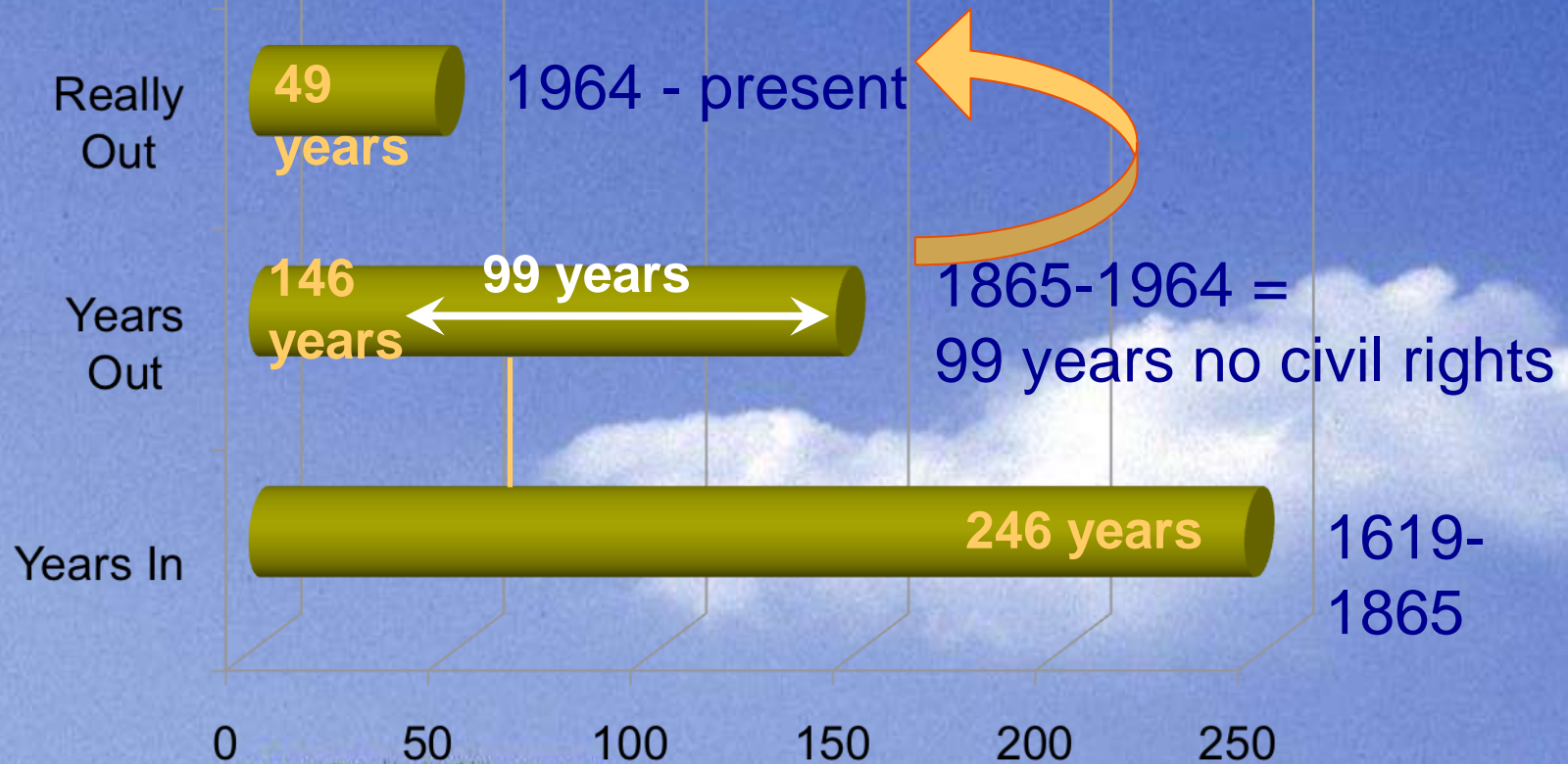


BlackDemographics.com (15yrs and older) 2010	African American			Other Races
	All	Female	Male	
Now married	32%	28.7%	35.8%	51.3%
Widowed	6.2%	9.1%	2.7%	5.9%
Divorced	10.9%	12.4%	9.1%	9.8%
Separated	4.1%	4.6%	3.5%	2.3%
Never married	46.8%	45.2%	48.8%	30.7%

US Census Bureau: America's Families and Living Arrangements: 2010

History and the Politics/Consciousness

The African Maafa in Real Time



“We need a mass-based movement for mental health patterned after AA, where there are meetings people can attend and have education for critical consciousness... We need to start where we are, in the places where people live...” —bell hooks

More from Dr. King

*..."Any movement for the Negro's freedom that overlooks this necessity is only waiting to be buried. As long as the mind is enslaved, the body can never be free. **Psychological freedom**, a firm sense of self-esteem, is the most powerful weapon against the long night of physical slavery".*

MLK Proud to Be Maladjusted

Rationale for Our Work: Overcoming the Lie

The **LIE** of Black inferiority –

- ❑ Used to justify the enslavement and subjugation of African people for centuries –
- ❑ The source of our collective historical trauma – is still very much with us

“If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself.” — Dr. Carter G. Woodson

The Lie of Black Inferiority

“ [There is] a peculiar kind of communal self-hatred, an especially virulent form of anger, self-loathing, and lost hope, that leads to a devaluation of the lives of fellow Blacks, and to...a devaluation of the self.”

—Dr. Alvin Poussaint and Amy Alexander



- ***"The most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed."*** Stephen Biko, speech in Cape Town, 1971



- That **LIE** tells us that Black people are not as beautiful, lovable, intelligent, capable, and worthy as other people ...



- 
- It undermines Black people's sense of worth,
 - The well-being of Black families, and
 - Black children's sense of positive possibilities

Defy the Lie

- To reverse these negative trends, Black people must engage in the struggle for what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. called “psychological freedom,” –
- We call it:
“Emotional EmancipationSM”

“No Lincolnian Proclamation, no Johnsonian civil rights bill ... the Negro will only be free, when he reaches down to the inner depths of his own being and signs with the pen and ink of assertive manhood (womanhood) his (her) own Emancipation Proclamation.”

■ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

"It becomes more necessary to see the truth as it is, if you realize that the only vehicle for change are these people who have lost their personality. The first step therefore is to make the black man come to himself; to pump back life into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth." ~ Steve Biko. (1978).



Why Emotional EmancipationSM?

Emotional Emancipation requires
admitting that we are all victims of
“*the greatest propaganda campaign
of all time*” (Burrell, 2010)

What is Emotional EmancipationSM?

- *Identity* and “a firm sense of self-esteem” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- ***Freedom*** from any and all toxic ideas about the inferiority of Black culture
- Freedom to see ourselves ***beyond*** the negative stereotypes that have burdened and limited us for centuries

Countering the Lie...

- Emotional EmancipationSM as psychological intervention
- Establishing the emotional foundations for each of us to become stronger, healthier, safer, more caring persons
- Creating a stronger, healthier, safer, more caring Black community in the United States and around the world!

How do we counter the Lie?

- Emotional emancipationSM ***requires*** a reclamation of our African cultural heritage
- Learning the lessons from our collective history
- Never apologizing for Africa
- Never allowing others to dismiss Africa

Emotional EmancipationSM is about healing....

- The historical trauma of 250 years of enslavement
- The ongoing assaults to our humanity and our civil rights from Jim Crow, industrial slavery, chain gangs, and through legalized and customary segregation

Emotional EmancipationSM is WORK!

- Working together to overcome the ***LIE*** of Black inferiority and the emotional legacies of slavery and racism that continue to keep us captive.
- Developing ongoing ways to promote ***Community Healing*** for our children, families, and communities

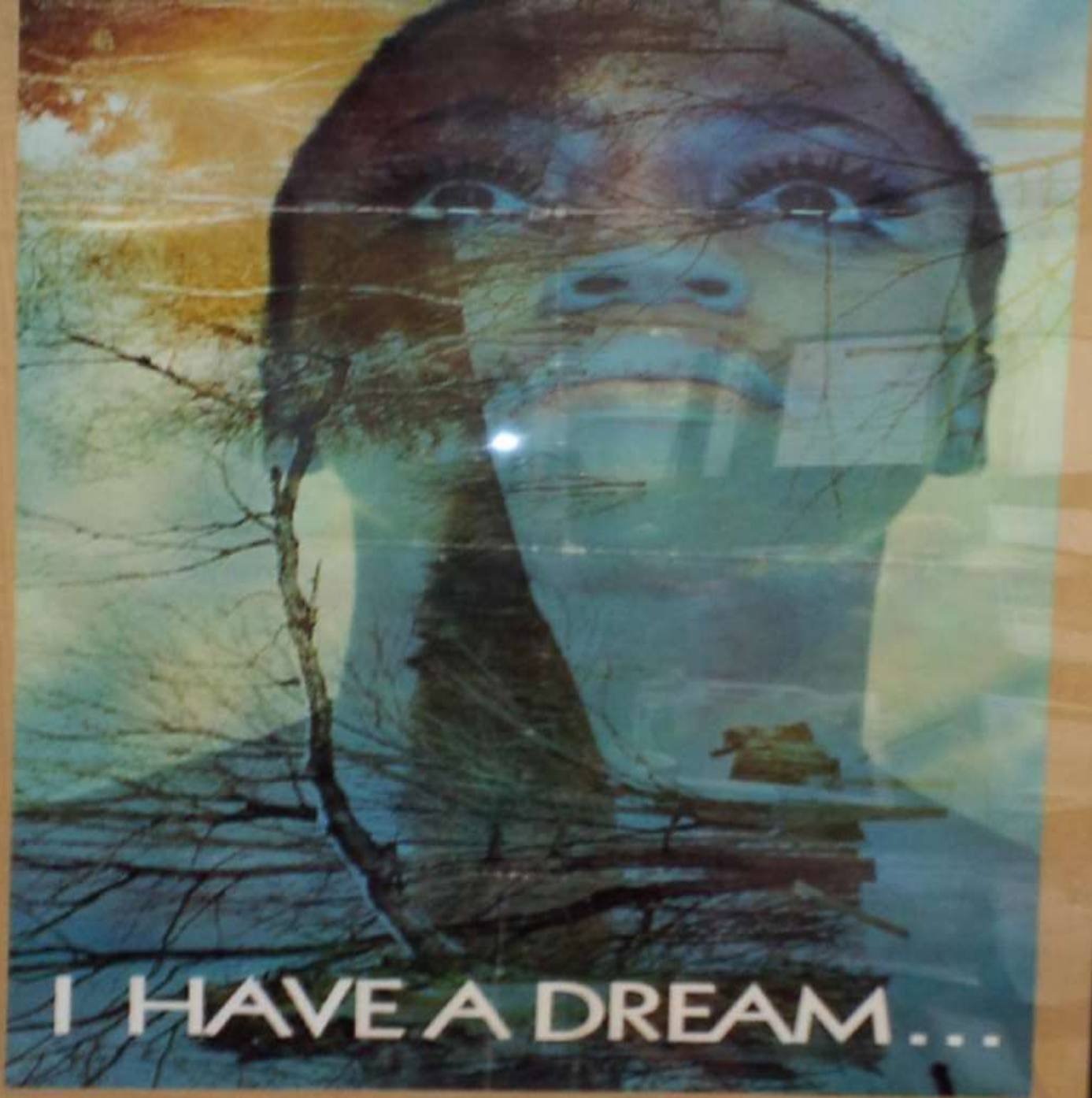
EECs

- EEC spaces *intentionally* counter the lie by emphasizing the core strengths and virtues we hold as individuals, families, and communities
- Create the conditions for healing conversations that lead to individual and collective recovery and wellness

EEC's Can Reaffirm Sense of Community

- A readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships on which one could depend (Sarason).
- The strength of the bonds between people; a feeling that members have of belongingness; a feeling that members matter to one another and the to the group; a shared sense of faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment together (McMillan & Chavis).





I HAVE A DREAM...

Thank You!

- For additional information:
 - www.ABPSI.org
 - www.CommunityHealingNet.org
 - <http://www.defythelie.org/>

